



# 13

Interregional  
Innovation  
Investment  
**Instrument**

**6th Contact Point (NCP) network meeting**  
**19 September 2025**



The background features a complex abstract design. On the left, there are intricate blue circuit-like patterns, including lines, dots, and a grid, set against a light orange circular backdrop. A solid orange circle is positioned in the upper right of this area. Below the circuit patterns, several concentric orange circles are visible. On the right side, there are three horizontal lines of varying lengths, each ending in a small blue dot. The overall color palette consists of various shades of orange and blue.

## Content:

- I3 instrument overview
- Call for Proposals Strand 1 & Strand 2a (2025)
- I3 & INTERREG

The background features a complex abstract design. On the left, there are intricate blue circuit-like patterns, including lines, dots, and a grid, set against a light orange circular backdrop. A solid orange circle is positioned in the upper left. In the lower left, several concentric orange circles are visible. On the right side, three horizontal lines with blue circular endpoints extend from the left towards the center. The text 'I3 instrument overview' is written in white on the right side of the image.

# I3 instrument overview

**Cohesion Policy: € 392 billion in 2021-2027**

**European Regional  
Development Fund**

**INTERREG**

**€ 10 billion**

**I3 INSTRUMENT**

**€ 490  
millions**



**European  
Commission**



# Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument



## INTERREGIONAL

- Creating links between EU regions around **shared or complementary smart specialisation (S3)** areas and involving all components of the regional or national innovation ecosystems
- Supporting the development of value chains in less developed regions



*The interregional component provides a unique opportunity to cross-fertilise actual instruments and facilitate the market uptake of the solutions developed.*

Myriam Martin, HealthChain project



## INNOVATION

- Testing, demonstration, piloting, large-scale product validation and market replication, adaptation of existing prototypes
- Accelerating innovation, bringing innovative solutions and new products in:
  - **Digital transition**
  - **Green transition**
  - **Smart manufacturing**



*The programme helped us establish the first interregional green hydrogen value chain in South Estonia and Northern Latvia for activating the emerging hydrogen and providing a blueprint for setting up green hydrogen ecosystems in other regions.*

Jaanus Tamm, H2 Value project project



## INVESTMENTS

- Financial and advisory support for joint innovation projects
- Smart economic transformation by moving from investment ideas to actual implementation
- Direct investment to companies (mainly SMEs)



*I3 Instrument supports SMEs to be internationally competitive whilst at the same time addressing actual pan-European unmet needs and unlocking cross-sectoral and inter-regional markets.*

Magnus Wallengren, Digit Pre project

# 13 thematic areas and strands

## THEMATIC AREAS



DIGITAL  
TRANSITION



GREEN  
TRANSITION



SMART  
MANU-  
FACTURING

## STRANDS

**Strand 1** | support for investments in interregional innovation projects in shared smart specialisation areas

**Strand 2a** | support for investments in interregional innovation projects for the development of value chains in less developed regions

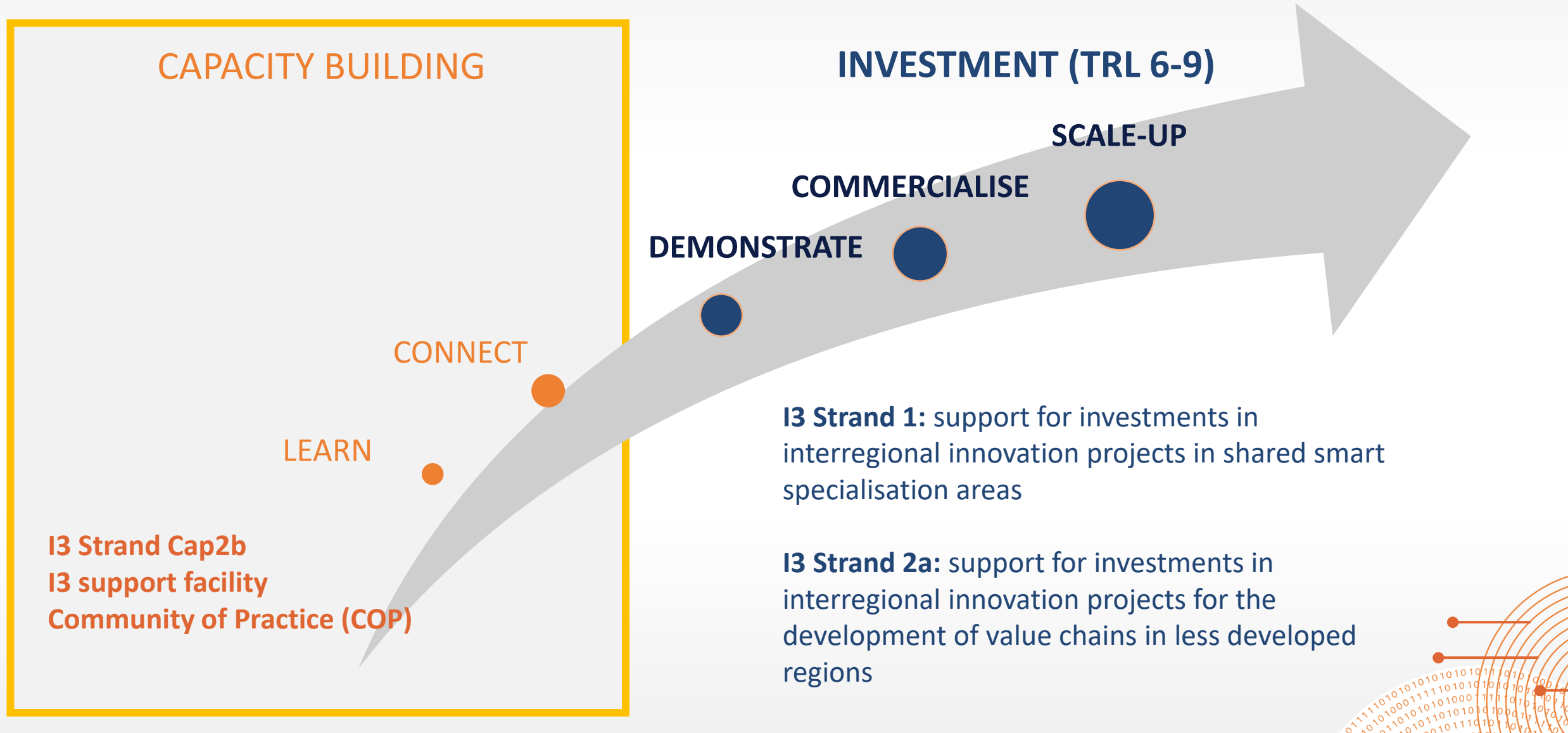
**Strand 2b** | Capacity building for the development of value chains in less developed regions

Technical assistance & experimentation

€ 490 million



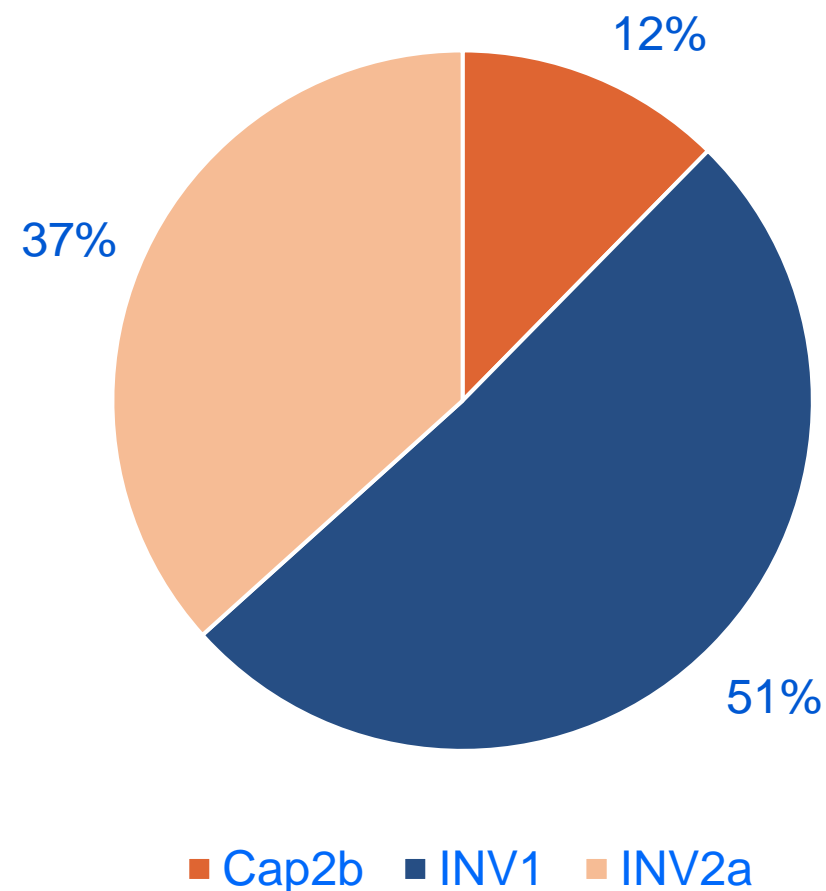
# I3 Instrument - Financing mature innovation to bridge the innovation divide through interregional collaboration



# Comparative budget allocation among the three Strands

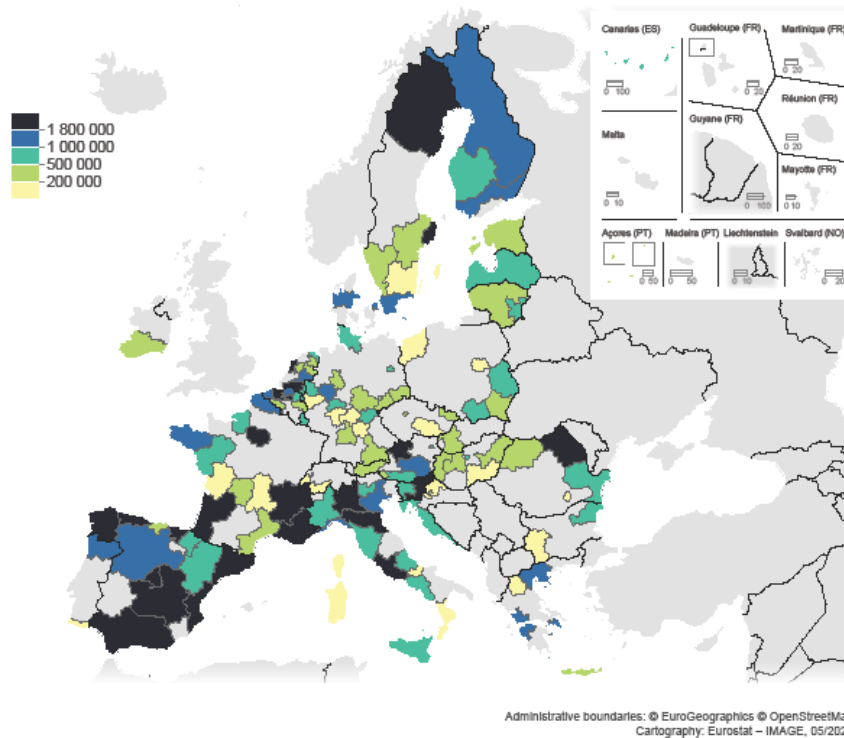
## 2021-2025

Call type	Total awarded
Cap2b	€ 37,380,161
INV1	€ 154,183,405
INV2a	€ 110,927,539

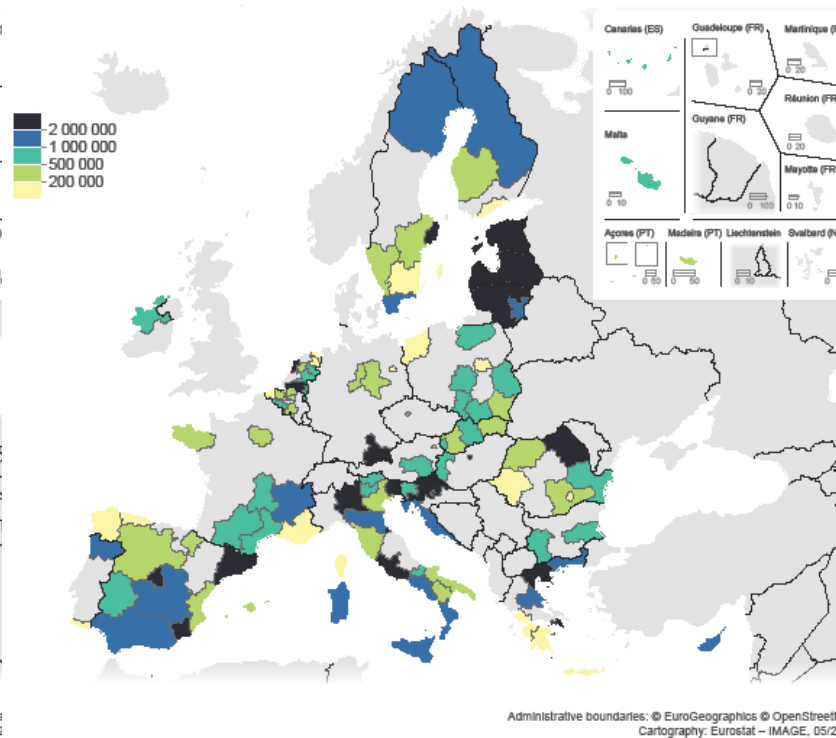




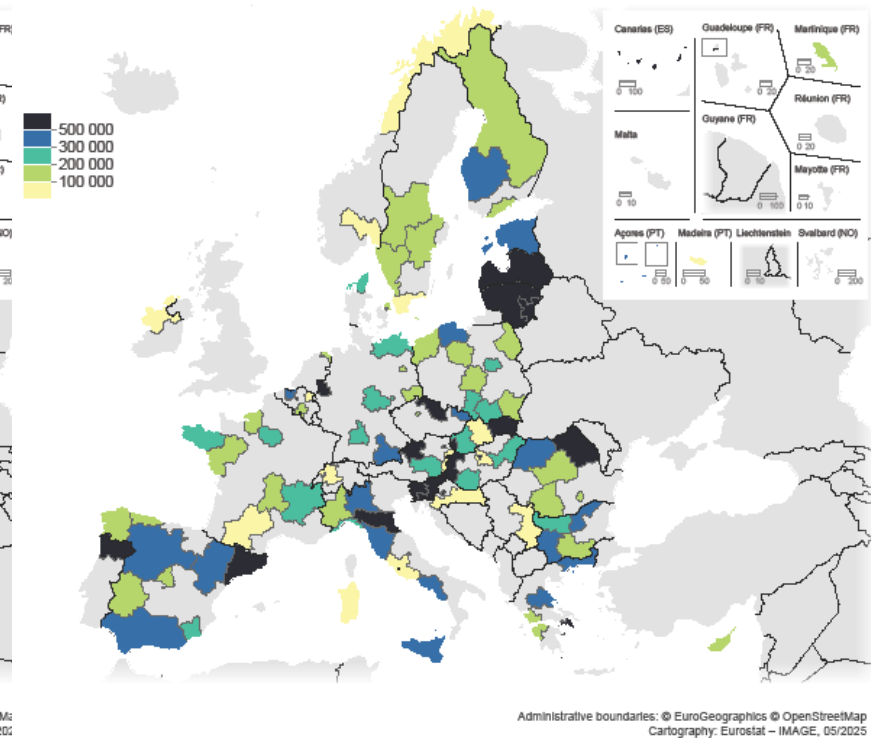
# Mapping grants distribution – Region prospective - General overview



INV1



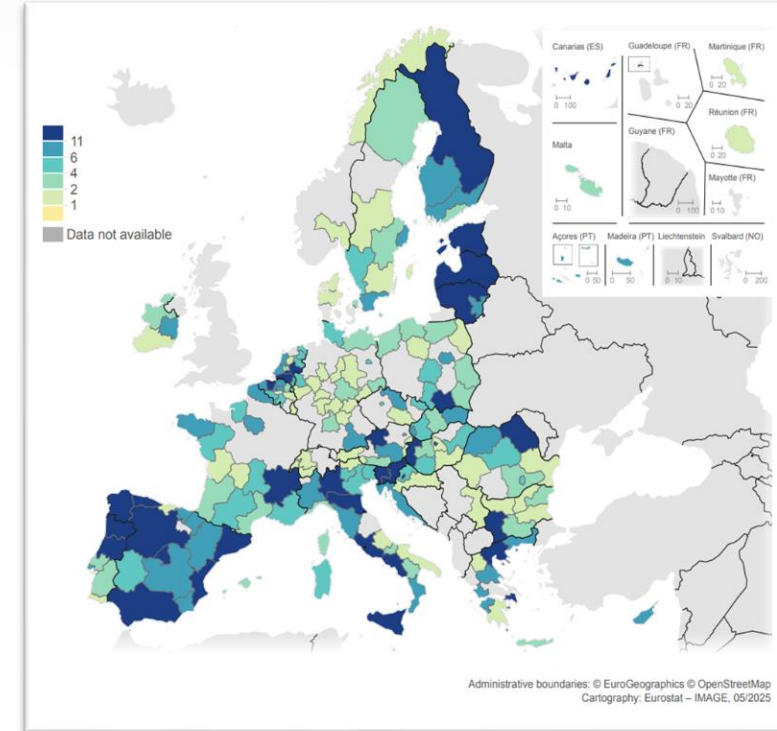
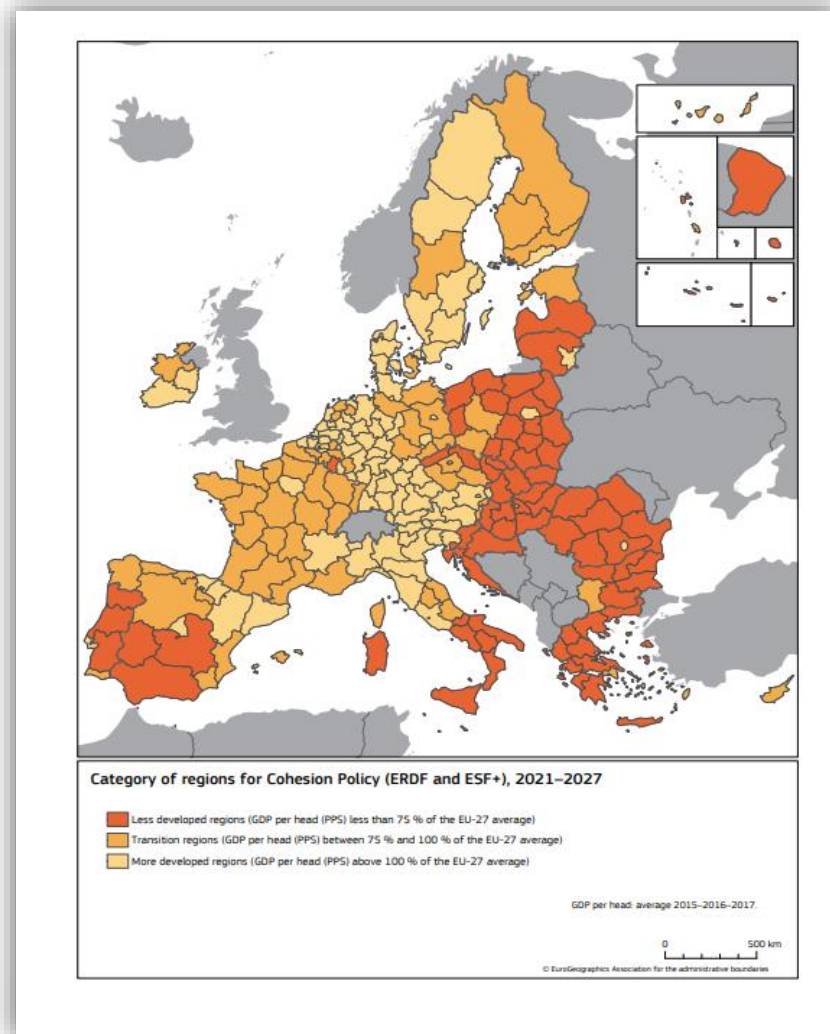
INV2a



Cap2b



# How I3 Supports Closing Territorial Disparities



- **13 grants distribution 2021-2025:** Actual participation in 13 projects is broad but uneven — with strong engagement from some regions.

→ A large share of partners come from LDRs and TRs – more than in any comparable innovation programme.

# Thematic focus per strand

computing\_and\_cloud  
mobility **biotech** sustainability  
**circular\_economy**  
standards battery soil energy\_transition  
**blue\_economy**  
wine **agri-food** health  
sport  
digitalisation hydrogen  
bioeconomy  
critical\_raw\_materials

INV 1

medical\_devices  
heating\_and\_cooling energy\_transition  
**digitalisation**  
**circular\_economy** buildings  
blue\_economy  
**sustainability**  
agri-food **green\_transition**  
key\_products biotech hydrogen  
medical\_research  
decarbonisation

Cap2b

sustainability  
internet\_of\_things **mobility** energy\_transition  
**critical\_raw\_materials**  
agri-food wine  
climate\_change forestry  
green\_tech health biotech ai chronic\_disease  
**circular\_economy** plastic  
precision\_farming urban\_mine extended\_reality  
agriculture digitalisation  
healthcare  
digital\_health

INV 2a



The background features a complex abstract design. On the left, there are intricate blue circuit-like patterns, including lines, dots, and a grid, set against a light orange circular backdrop. A solid orange circle is positioned in the upper left. In the lower left, several concentric orange circles are visible. On the right side, three horizontal lines with circular endpoints extend from the left towards the center. The main title text is located on the right side of the image.

# Presentation of the 2025 Calls Strand 1 & Strand 2a (2025)

# Specific objectives

## STRAND 1

- to increase the **competitiveness and the resilience of EU value chains** in **shared smart specialisation areas**
- the development of already existing or the creation of new interregional and cross-border value chains, better connection between regional innovation ecosystems;
- the collaboration between innovation actors (SMEs) using **S3 as coordination principle**
- the support of innovation actors with investment ideas that are ready to be developed into **mature business cases**

## STRAND 2a

- the support of innovation actors to develop mature business cases
- the creation of new value chains in LDRs and the integration into interregional and cross-border value chains with more developed regions
- new regional market opportunities
- bridging the gap between the supply and demand sides to help innovation ecosystems overcome market failures
- Technology transfer





# Thematic priorities

Green transition

Digital transition

## Strand 1

Financial and advisory support for investments in interregional innovation projects



## Strand 2a

Financial and advisory support to the development of value chains in regions

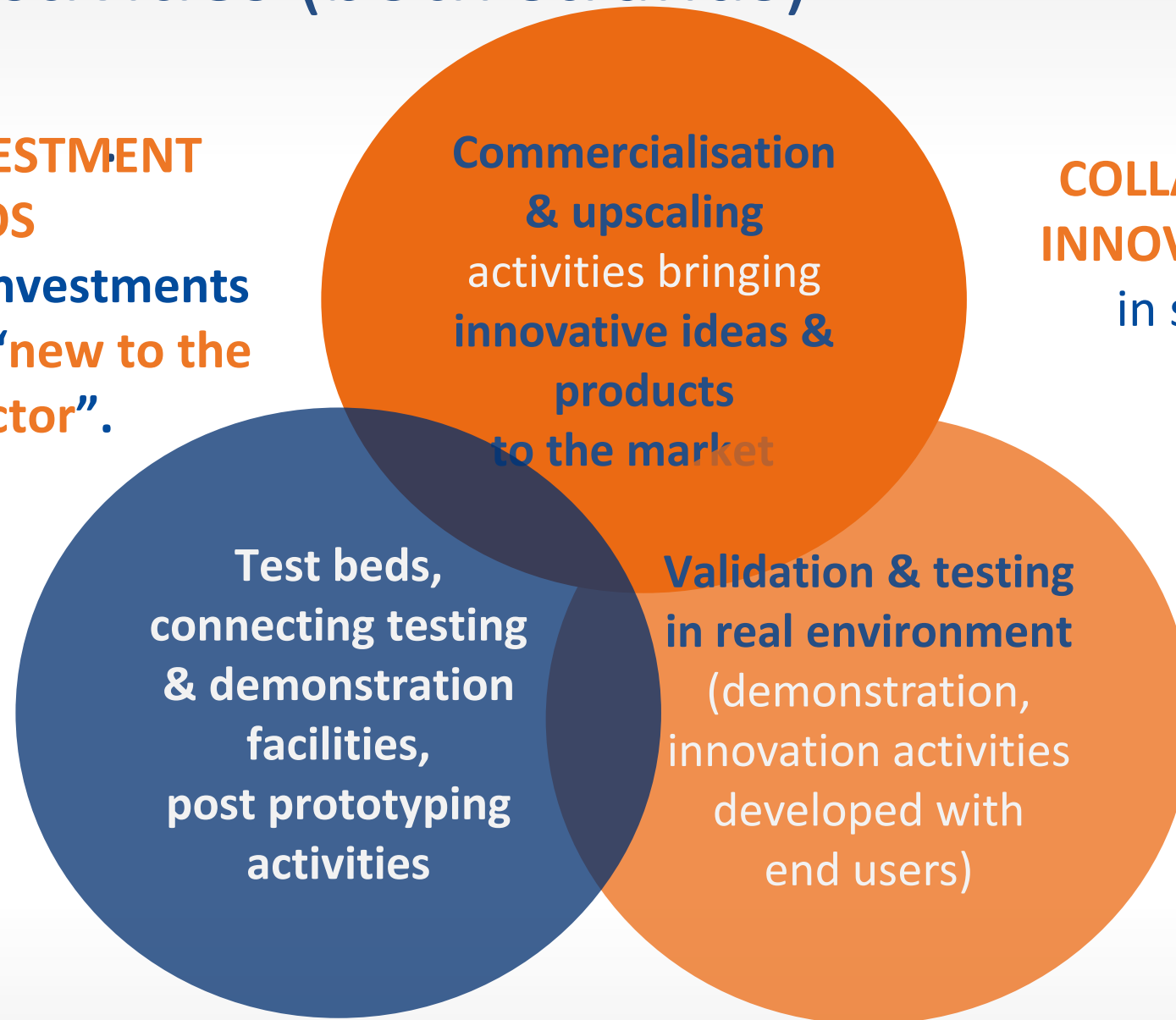
Smart manufacturing



# Eligible activities (both strands)

## VALUE CHAIN INVESTMENT PORTFOLIOS

**Implementation of Investments**  
“new to Europe” or “new to the application sector”.



**COLLABORATIVE JOINT  
INNOVATION ACTIVITIES**  
in shared S3 areas

**instrumental to bring innovative ideas and new products to the market**

# Type of support & specific requirements



## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

1. Direct funding of consortium's beneficiaries
2. Through cascade funding / financial support to third parties (optional)

## ADVISORY SUPPORT

1. Advisory support (on IPR, standardisation certification, etc.)
2. Networking activities (matchmaking for market penetration, trainings for the introduction of innovative technologies and solution etc.)

### Specific requirements:

- *Min 70% of the budget* must be allocated to investments in companies, ie:
  - SME Consortium partners
  - Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP)
  - non-financial support provided to the SMEs belonging to the portfolio (SME partners and FSTP SMEs).
- *Min 50% of the total eligible costs will have to benefit LDRs (including outermost regions)*
- *Max 30% of the total budget* shall be spent through FSTP

**The proposal shall describe how these 3 requirements will be met.**

# Investment dimension



- **Tangible and Intangible investments** (see ERDF regulation)
- Investment justified by a **market analysis or a business and investment plan**
- Identified **time to market** or the **TRL of departure** (min. requirement TRL>6)
- **Defined private/public** investments leveraged by the project
- **Multilevel architecture** of the investment project (national, regional, European)
- **Portfolio balance** across geographical regions (MDR, LDR)
- **Evidence based**, expected territorial impact

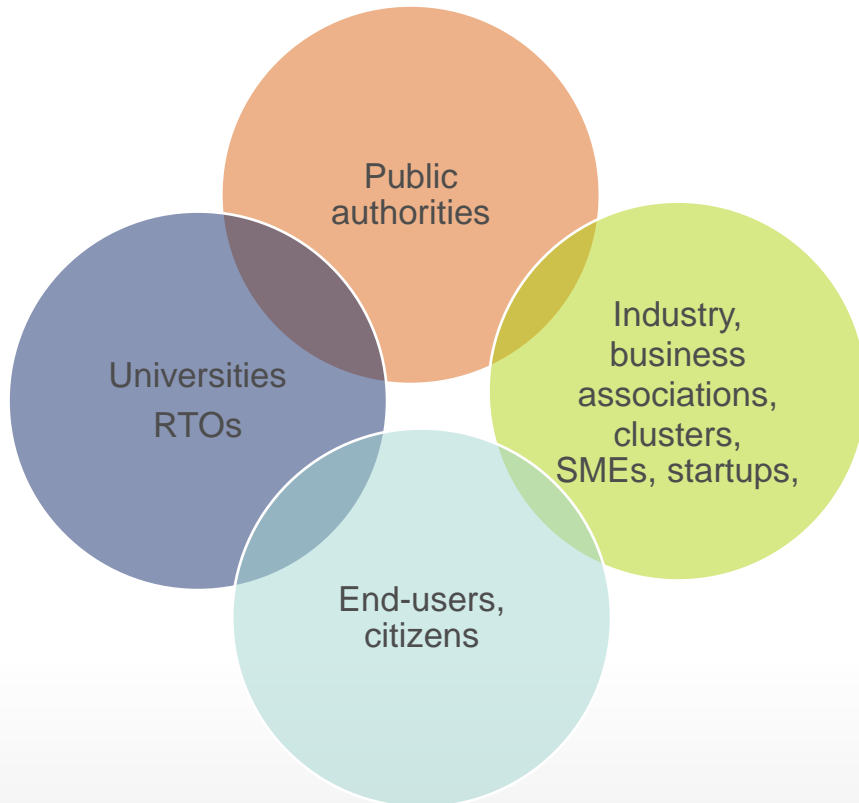
## PORTFOLIO APPROACH:

identification, within a specific **thematic/technological area of cooperation**, of a number of **investment-ready sub-projects** that address one or several challenges/ bottlenecks faced by the consortium

# Interregional Dimension

## Applicants:

**Q-helix partnerships** on behalf of a regional / national ecosystems



**Interrelated interregional innovation investments in value chains (S3 as coordination principle)**

**At the appropriate NUTS level**

**Minimum conditions in terms of ecosystems involved**

(different for strand 1 and 2a)

**The consortium must cover demand & supply side**





# Project budget and duration, funding rate

B  
O  
T  
H  
  
S  
T  
R  
A  
N  
D  
S

Project size

€ 2 – 10 million

Duration

18 – 36 months

Funding rate

70% for all other cost categories

100% for costs of FSTP

**Strand 1**

€ 23 million  
2025

**Strand 2a**

€ 24 million  
2025



# Consortium composition

Strand 1	Strand 2a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– at least <b>5 independent legal entities</b> established in <b>5 different regions</b> of at least <b>3 eligible countries</b>.</li><li>– at least <b>2 legal entities</b> must come from <b>less developed regions</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– at least <b>3 independent legal entities</b> established in <b>3 different regions</b> in at least <b>2 eligible countries</b></li><li>– the consortium shall represent <b>at least 1 more developed region</b> and must have a strong involvement of less developed regions and focus on their needs</li></ul>

The **consortium coordinator** must be:

- Public body or
- Non-for-profit organisation or
- **entity entrusted by national or regional governments** to develop or implement innovation and investment actions for SMEs (i.e. a cluster organisations, development agencies, or innovation agencies etc.).



# Award criteria

AWARD CRITERIA	MIN	MAX
<b>RELEVANCE</b> proposal matches the objectives; participation of LDR and outermost regions; relevance of the proposed innovation, novelty and ambition	5	10
<b>QUALITY</b> quality of the consortium and project teams; procedures and problem-solving mechanisms; technical quality; logical frame concept: methodology: timetable: risk management	2.5	5
<b>COST EFFECTIVENESS</b> cost effectiveness; sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money	2.5	5
<b>IMPACT</b> ambition and expected long-term impact; dissemination and exploitation strategy; potential for replication and perspectives for up-scaling in LDRs, sustainability of results after EU funding ends.	2.5	5
<b>OVERALL (PASS) SCORES</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>25</b>

# Indicative timeline



The background features a complex design. On the left, a circular area contains a detailed blue circuit board pattern with various traces, pads, and a central component-like shape. This is overlaid on a larger, semi-transparent orange circle. To the right, a large, solid orange circle is partially visible. In the bottom left, several concentric blue circles are shown, with three horizontal lines extending from them to the right, each ending in a small blue dot.

**I3 & INTERREG**



# The relationship between the I3 Instrument and INTERREG is defined by Article 13 of the ERDF Regulation:

“7. When implementing this instrument, the Commission shall ensure coordination and synergy with other Union funding programmes and instruments and in particular with strand ‘Interreg C’ as defined in point 3 of Article 3 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059.”



← STRENGTHENING COOPERATION BETWEEN EU REGIONS AND COUNTRIES →

EUR 394 Million  
budget 2021-  
2027

**INTERREG EUROPE**

**I3 INSTRUMENT**

EUR 570 Million  
ERDF budget  
2021-2027

Supporting local, regional and national governments  
across Europe to develop and deliver better policy

**SCOPE**

Promoting mature innovation through interregional  
collaboration and S3 to bridge the EU regional  
development gaps

Public authorities and other organisations relevant  
for regional development policies

**BENEFICIARIES**

Companies and especially SMEs, public authorities,  
universities, end-users and other innovation actors



SMART



GREEN



CONNECTED



SOCIAL



CITIZENS



GOVERNANCE

**TOPICS**



DIGITAL TRANSITION



GREEN TRANSITION



SMART MANUFACTURING

**EU Burning  
challenges**

Interregional cooperation capacity building projects –  
exchange and transfer experience on shared regional  
development issues

Policy Learning Platform – policy-learning services  
made available through experts support

**STRANDS FOR  
SUPPORT**

Strand 1 – interregional innovation investment  
projects along shared or complementary S3

Strand 2a – interregional innovation investments  
projects for the development of value chains in LDR

Strand 2b – capacity building for LDR

← **LEARN-CONNECT**

**COLLABORATE**

**CO-INVEST** →

# INTERREG EUROPE

Supports public authorities to learn, connect and collaborate on the development of regional policies

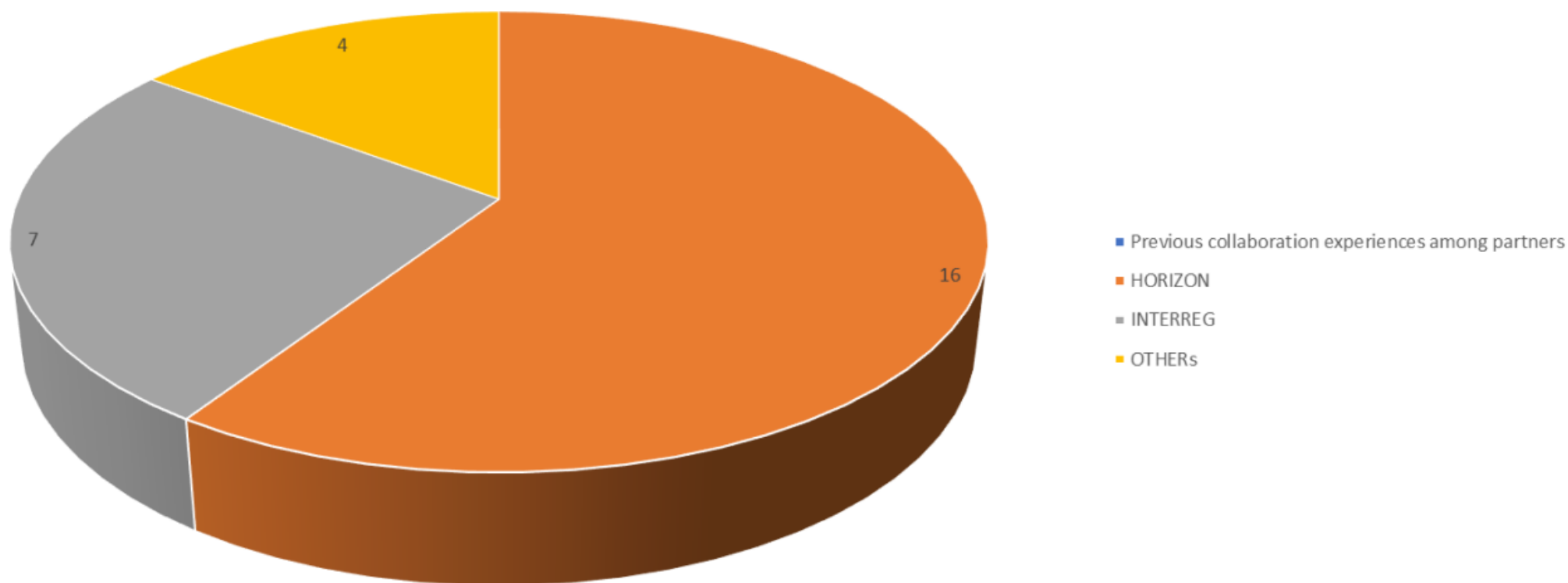
Covers capacity building and interregional peer review processes that prepare the ground for co-investments under the I3 Instrument

Provides Interreg Europe with a useful 'feedback to policy' output for its Policy Learning Platform

Fosters better coordinated investments based on improved regional development policies supported under Interreg Europe

# I3 INSTRUMENT

# Previous collaboration experience of among PPs within the 27 running projects in 2024:



# A practical example:

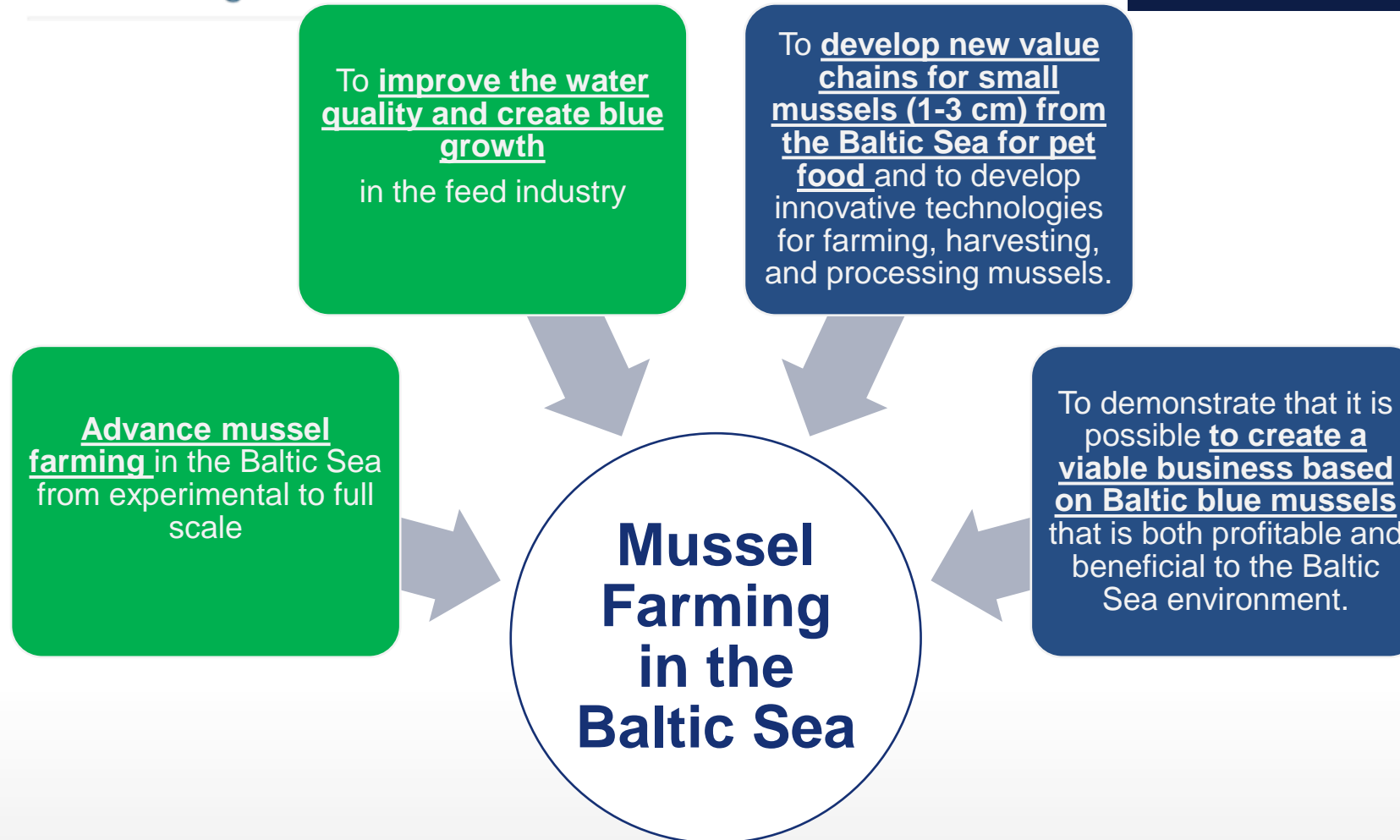
## Baltic Blue



## BalticMUPPETS



### O B J E C T I V E S





# A practical example:

## Baltic Blue



## BalticMUPPETS



P  
A  
R  
T  
N  
E  
R  
S  
H  
I  
P



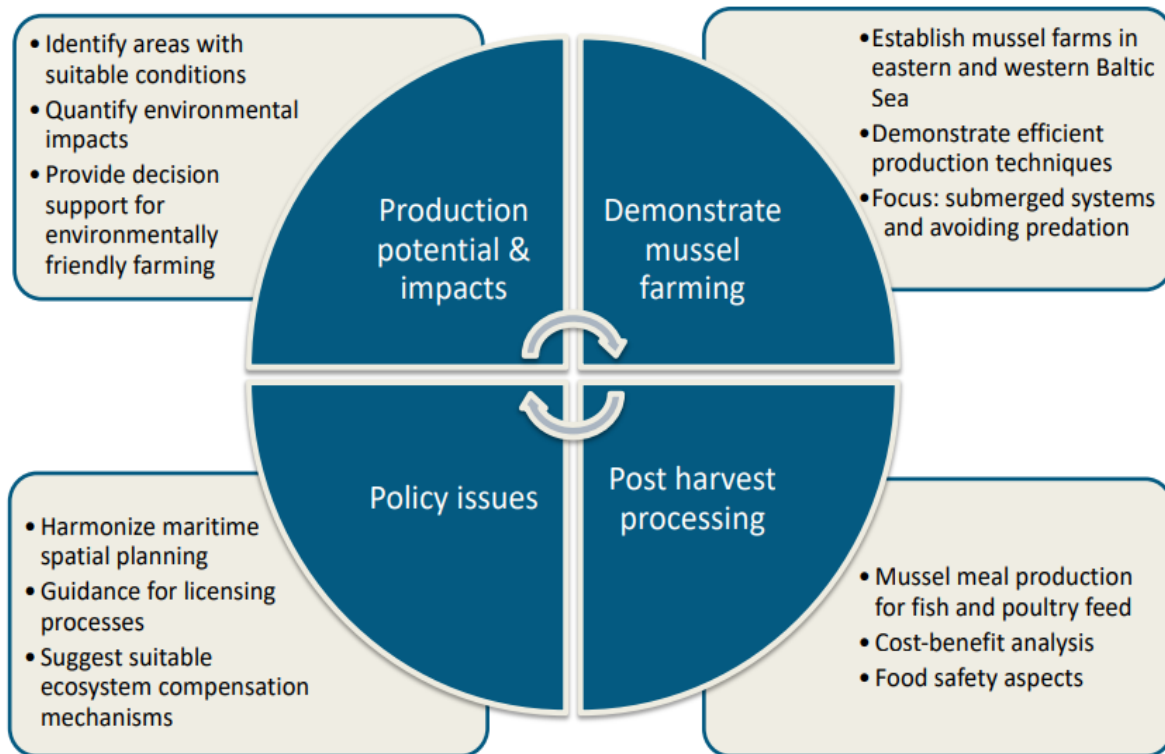
+ 20 associated organisations



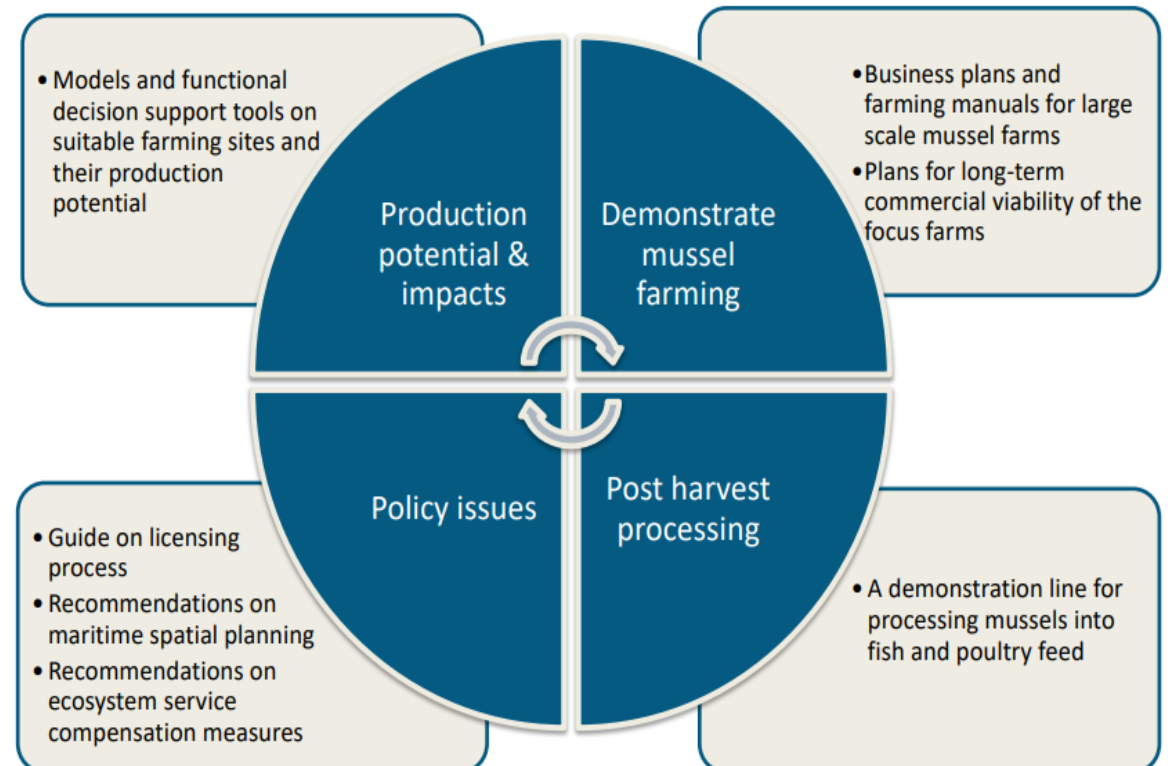
# A practical example: Baltic Blue



## Project structure and activities



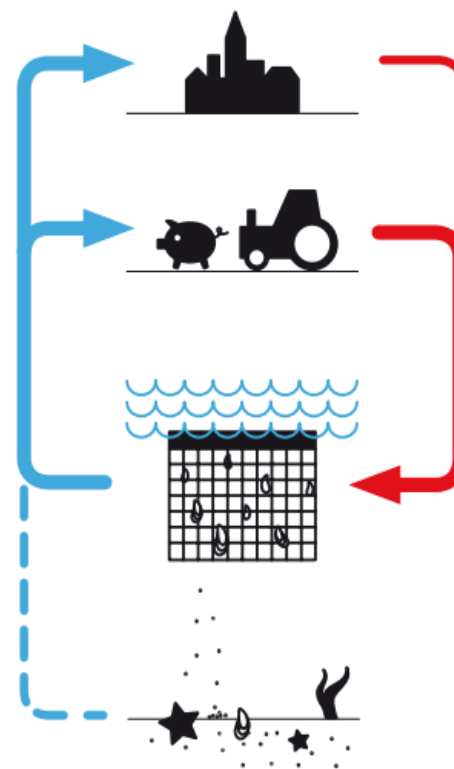
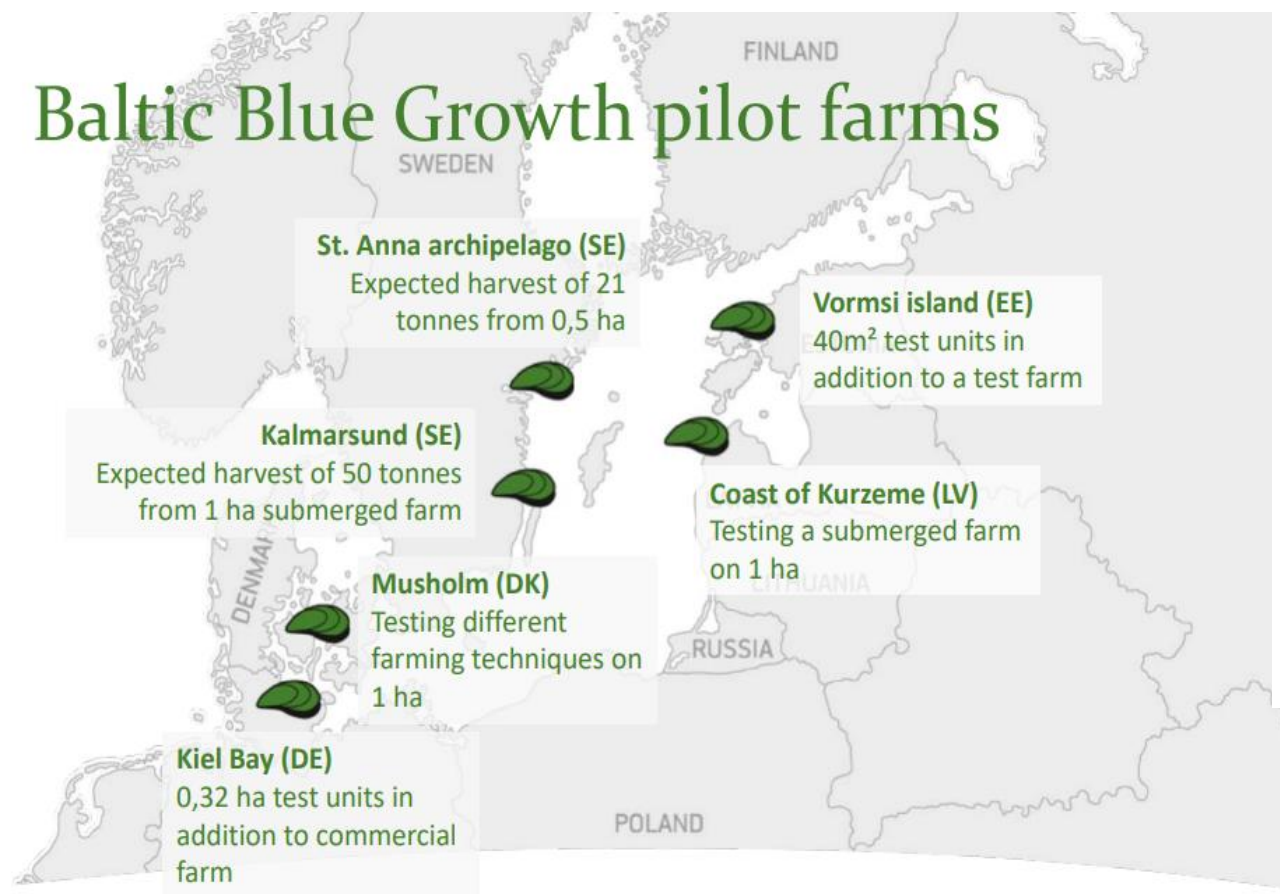
## Expected outputs





# A practical example: Baltic Blue



## Baltic Blue Growth pilot farms

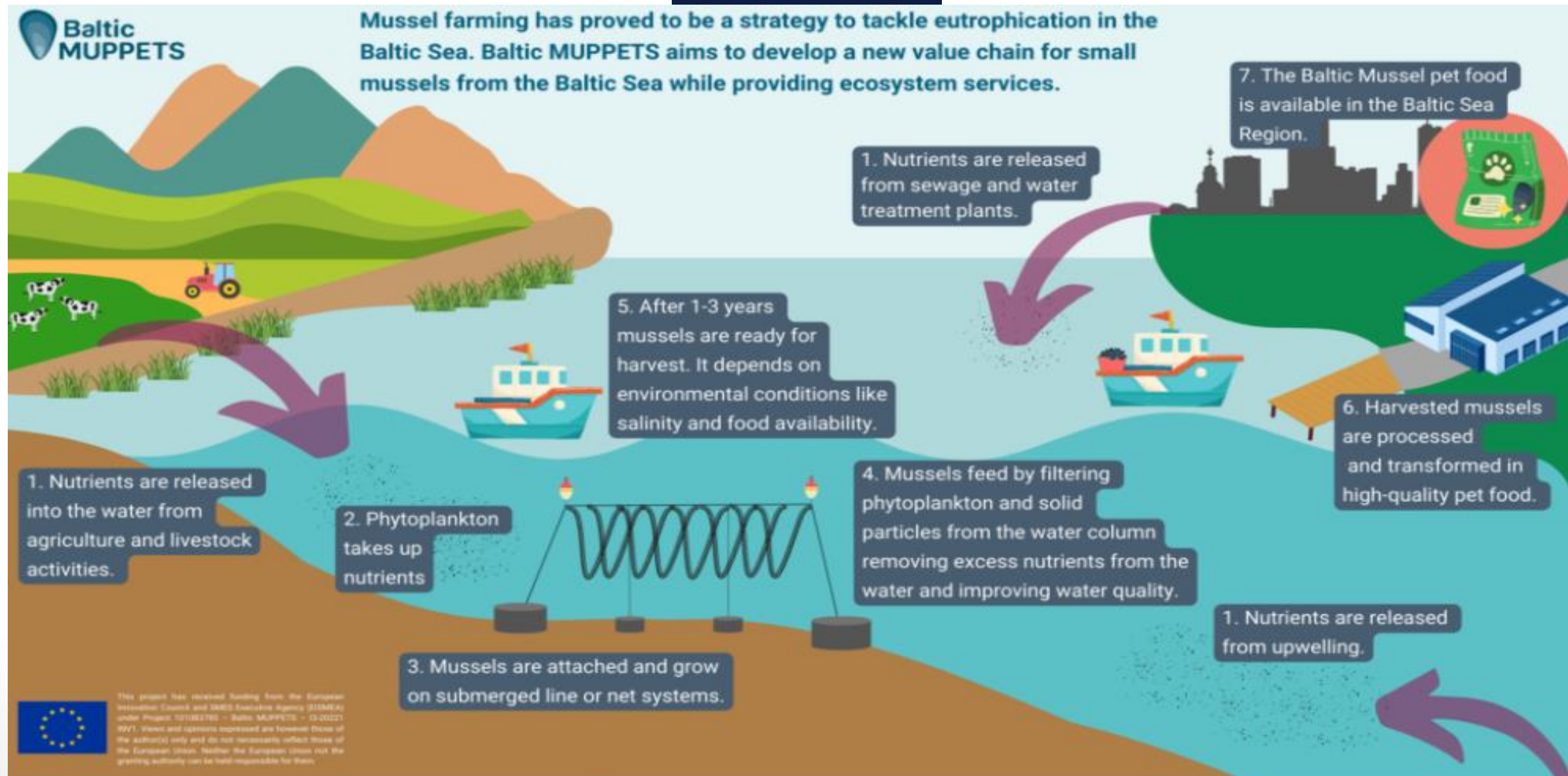


-  Concept of “closing the nutrient loop” by recycling nutrients through mussel farming
-  Farming mussels can improve the Baltic Sea water quality by reducing eutrophication

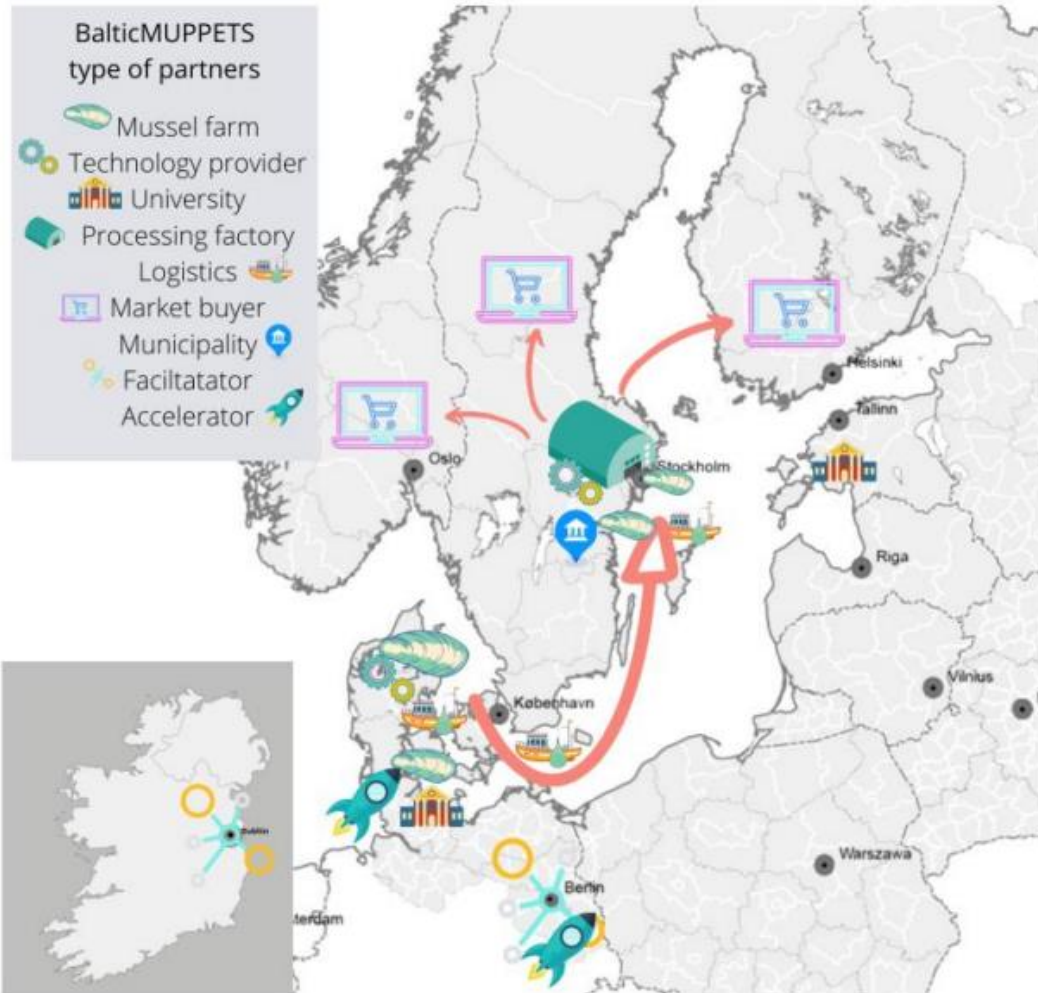


# A practical example: BalticMUPPETS

**I3** Interregional  
Innovation  
Investment  
Instrument



# A practical example: BalticMUPPETS



Swedish case: SEA

– Save the Baltic Sea

Non-profit “charity” with submerged farms. Their business scheme is based on support and donations (private, companies) in exchange of delivered ecosystem service (nutrient reduction, eutrophication abatement).

They will introduce a second revenue stream based on marketing small mussel to premium pet-food Scandinavian markets.

Integrated value chain in/near Stockholm and Kalmar.



Danish case: WIS

- The exporter

Established large mussel farm company (est. 1990) in Limfjord with clients and exports in HORECA supermarket chains also abroad.

They are looking for market opportunities for small unutilised “waste-mussels”.

They own several mussel farms with long line systems. Now they developed a novel sub-merged mussel farm technology.



German case: KMF

- The local producer

Established small farm in Kiel, with strong presence in local market and society.

They sell premium organic certified mussels.

Interested to scale up (with ready licenses) and developing a German market for products based on small mussel.

## Business cases of BalticMUPPETS



A practical example:

Baltic Blue



BalticMUPPETS



T  
H  
E  
L  
I  
N  
K

The starting point of BalticMUPPETS is the main achievement of Baltic Blue Growth that demonstrated mussel farming and investigated business models and legal framework for unlocking its potential in the region



Ecopelag's mussel meal turned into premium cat and dog food







# Thank you!



<https://eisma.ec.europa.eu>



[EISMEA-I3-INSTRUMENT@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EISMEA-I3-INSTRUMENT@ec.europa.eu)



#I3Instrument